

House, nor the American people, had the chance to read the bill before we cast our votes.

Then in June, this House voted on a cap-and-trade national energy tax that would fundamentally change our economy. This bill totaled 1,428 pages, including a 300-plus page manager's amendment. The Rules Committee and the Democratic leadership gave us about 16 hours to read the bill and the amendment before it was voted on. Only after the fact did we see a memo produced within the Obama administration that indicated that the bill would cost every single American household an average of \$1,700 per year in higher energy costs.

Madam Speaker, we will soon consider health care legislation that will have a far-reaching impact on one of the most personal issues facing every American, and that is how they will protect the health of themselves and their families. Nobody knows what this legislation will look like. Nobody knows how much it will cost. Nobody knows when it will be brought to the floor. But every American has a vital stake in the outcome of the legislation.

Many Members of this House from both parties have had enough and are insisting that we bring transparency into the process before a vote is taken, and the American people are demanding the opportunity to be able to read the legislation that their Representatives will be voting on before the vote so that their voices can be heard. That is why I am proud to cosponsor H. Res. 554 which would require that all major legislation, significant amendments and conference reports be available in their entirety on the Internet so that Members can read the legislation before casting their votes and so that the American people can have some opportunity to have their voices heard. If legislation that will govern more than one-sixth of our economy comes to the floor, don't Members as well as the American people deserve a chance to at least read it?

President Obama ran last year on a platform of openness and transparency, but unfortunately, it has been business as usual in Washington. We have had limited to no transparency. We have not had a chance to read important legislation before asking for us to vote on this legislation. I would urge my fellow Members who have not signed on as cosponsors of this important resolution to join us in an effort to bring transparency to the process, to join us in demanding that we in Congress cast an informed vote on important legislation that will impact every American, to join us in allowing the American people to have their voices heard. The Members of this House and, most importantly, Madam Speaker, the American people deserve no less.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PAULSEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PAULSEN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS HOUR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. FUDGE. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks in the RECORD on this topic.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Ms. FUDGE. I appreciate the opportunity to join my colleagues of the Congressional Black Caucus for this special hour. Currently, the CBC is chaired by the Honorable BARBARA LEE from the Ninth Congressional District of California. My name is Representative MARCIA L. FUDGE, and I represent the 11th Congressional District of Ohio. CBC members work diligently to be the conscience of the Congress and provide dedicated and focused service to our congressional districts and families nationally and internationally. The vision of the founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus is to promote the public welfare through legislation designed to meet the needs of millions of neglected citizens. It continues to be a focal point for the legislative work and the political activities of the Congressional Black Caucus today. As Members of Congress, CBC members also promote civic engagement and active participation in the legislative process.

The United States is the world's longest-existing democracy. Americans understand that our ability to elect our leadership through a democratic process is precious, and we recognize the need for greater civic engagement. Madam Speaker, I have been joined by my friend and colleague, the Honorable SHEILA JACKSON-LEE from Texas.

I now yield to my friend.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Thank you so very much, Congresswoman FUDGE. Your opening remarks are framed excellently, the reason for our presence here tonight. There are many issues that the Congressional Black Caucus, led by Chairwoman BARBARA LEE, focus on. The disciplines of the members are varied. The chairmanships of the members are varied, including full chairmanships on a number of committees which really enhance the opportunity for a very full agenda.

As I listen to you speak about civic participation, I would venture to say—and probably would not be incorrect—that all of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus and our colleagues

here, Republicans and Democrats, engaged in civic participation before being elected to the United States Congress.

□ 2030

They may have started in their early educational days, if you will, primary and secondary school. Some may have started in college. Some may have been activists or locally elected officials. But they understood under this democracy, as you have indicated, the importance of participatory process.

I have the privilege of serving on the House Judiciary Committee with Chairman JOHN CONYERS, and our committees embrace this whole question of fair election laws, the right to vote, and the protection of that privilege and that right to vote.

You may be well aware that in the early days of my tenure, if you will, there were a number of occasions during the presidential election years that members of the Congressional Black Caucus came to the floor of the House to challenge the counting of the electoral college. You may be reminded that in the particular year of 2000, Ohio was in the crosshairs. I know how active you were, having gone to Ohio, having worked with you and, of course, your predecessor, walking the streets with you, remembering discussions that you had about ensuring that you had a election. As you recall, Ohio was quite upset and, therefore, it was the Congressional Black Caucus that went to the floor of the House, in particular your predecessor, the late Stephanie Tubbs Jones. We joined her in challenging the counting of the electoral votes of Ohio. Many people would wonder is that civic participation? And it is. It is making sure that any process is fair.

So I come to emphasize where we are today in pivotal elections that will be coming up on November 3, 2009. As I reflect on those elections, I want to remind people that the best of America was the times in which it moved to remove the barriers of voting. To remove the distinctions between slave and nonslave took a very long time. But to remove the distinction between landowner and nonlandowner were some of the first efforts to create an opportunity for all to vote.

In 1920, of course, there was the amendment to create the opportunity for women to vote. African Americans, however, and language minorities had longer periods of time, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 came around and then its amendment, which, by the way, the language minority provision in the Voting Rights Act was placed in that act by the Honorable Barbara Jordan, my predecessor. But the idea was to increase participation.

And as I listen to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle recounting maybe the dismay that they have in some of the major changes that are being made by both this White House and Congress, might I say that it is a

direct evidence of the vitality of the vote in 2008. It was not something that just developed. It was the message of the voters who went in huge numbers to the polls in November, 2008, ultimately electing President Barack Obama with the message of green energy or renewables or the opportunity for expanding the horizon on producing energy. And I come from oil and gas territory, and I frankly believe we have room for many of those energy types, but I recognize that green energy will be part of our future.

Likewise, the message came from the voters, because of their civic participation, on a vigorous public option in health care reform. So our colleagues are really speaking to the American people whose numbers say give us a vigorous public option.

This vote that is coming up, one or two of the most highlighted ones, of course, are Virginia and, of course, New Jersey. I am not here to speak particularly about the ultimate outcome, but there are messengers, the Governor of New Jersey, for example, who is carrying the message of change in this whole question of public health insurance or public option in health care and the idea of full employment. Likewise, those opportunities or discussions are being heard in Virginia as well.

It is important in every election that is coming up in November of 2009 for the same momentum and the same participation to surge as it did in 2008. And I think this Special Order, if you will, is enormously crucial for the fact that people don't think of elections when you don't focus them on a presidential election. They really think of elections as that highlight, but you are coming to bring to our attention the vitality and the importance of elections every single year, city elections, county elections, Federal elections, and State elections.

Ms. FUDGE. Reclaiming my time, just to take that one step further, I think that people don't understand the significance of voting, as you suggest, all the time. What most people don't realize is that it is bodies like ours, which the gentlewoman from Texas talked about, who make decisions about things that people never think about. Just the very air we breathe, we make decisions about pollution and how much pollution can be in the air, about the quality of the food people eat, about the quality of their children's education. Those are decisions that are made by elected officials many, many times. I think that if people understood how significant it is to vote and how much change could be made by a vote, more people might be inclined to do it on a regular basis.

I yield.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I thank the gentlewoman. That is why I salute you as I join with you in the Congressional Black Caucus because many would not think of bringing this to the attention of the American people.

In addition, I want to salute the Congress and the Congressional Black Caucus because this Democratic majority took the lead on fair election laws right after the unfortunate, I call it, debacle in Ohio. We began to talk about rewriting the election laws to insist that certain parameters be in place to protect the voter, to protect the voter at the voting ballot, to assess the kinds of voting tools that are being used, to try to find consistency. As you know, the most important issue was this accountability, the ability to track the balloting in electronic balloting, to have a paper trail, as we call it. We're still fighting to get that done, but we were the voices to speak about that so that people could have the ability to challenge.

Right now in Harris County we had a very difficult race in 2008. A number of candidates lost. They posed a challenge because they believed there were ballot infractions. We are now in the midst of looking at a settlement agreement that I believe may not be the right kind of settlement agreement, that really didn't answer the concerns of those who were violated, whose votes were not counted and the candidates who did not prevail because we felt that there were inaccuracies in a voting system or a voting office, if you will, the officer who presided over the voting count—there were some infractions.

So even today in 2009 we should not be hesitant to remind voters that a vote is precious, every vote counts, and that it is important, as the United States Congress exists, that local elected officials exist, that State officials exist, they exist because of the vote. And I am hoping as we have the spotlight on States like Virginia and New Jersey that we will spotlight on the local elections and that civic participation is the direct relationship for the kind of outstanding leadership that you get.

I want to yield back on this point: We have local elections in Houston, Texas, local elections around the Nation. Not one single vote should be diminished in its value, for your life gets changed or your voice gets heard by that vote. And it is my commitment, as a member of the Congressional Black Caucus and a member of the House Judiciary Committee, to insist, if you will, on the idea of full participation of voters and making sure that we have the opportunity to protect the right to vote and to make sure that, as protectors of the right to vote, people take advantage of it and vote.

Ms. FUDGE. Thank you so very much.

I just want to just go one step further and talk about the power of the vote. There are so many people who believe that one vote doesn't make a difference. I could go through a litany of things that were decided by one vote, but I won't. But what I will say is this: Your vote is your voice. If you don't vote, then you have silenced yourself.

So I think that it is important for us to understand and let the American people understand that no matter what the issue is, if you don't vote, what you've done is help the other side.

So let your voice be heard, because even though I wasn't in the House, obviously, when you took up this whole thing about revising the way we do elections, I am just so pleased that in my State as a result of that, we now have absentee voting for any person. It used to be you had to be a certain age or you had to be infirm or you had to be this. Now any single person with no reason whatsoever can request a vote from the comfort of their home. Especially when we have many, many issues as things get difficult and more and more communities are asking for resources, then they can sit and take their time and not be in a voting booth being rushed or feeling rushed because people are behind them.

I think it is something that really came out of that, and I appreciate and thank you and especially thank Stephanie Tubbs Jones for her work with it as well. But I just hope that people understand it is a responsibility. So many people fought to get us where we are today. It really is a responsibility to go out and vote.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. If the gentlelady would yield for a moment, I want to use one example because I chair the Congressional Children's Caucus. I remember in the summer of 2008, I was begging for Federal dollars for summer youth jobs. You remember those programs.

Ms. FUDGE. Yes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. And they existed 10, 15 years ago, 5 years ago, or I know they existed in the previous Democratic administration. But we literally were starving for those dollars over the last 8 years in the previous administration. So because we didn't have those dollars, I put together what you call a Houston summer job pilot program, where I grabbed small businesses and corporations in the summer of 2008 just to give these young people an opportunity. I couldn't give thousands but I gave a few the opportunity to work and to be paid. We raised the money, the community raised the money, to be paid by these small businesses.

The community needs to know, the Nation needs to know, that in 2009 with change and a new President, on the basis of the vote, there were millions of dollars going into communities during the summer for summer youth jobs.

I want people to take a poll. It's interesting that I'm hearing my colleagues talk about where did the stimulus dollars go? Ask some teenager that had a summer youth job and worked and did legitimate work, cleaned parks, worked in various community services, because of the summer youth program. That came about through a vote that you made, the Nation made, in 2008, where you elected a President, President Barack Obama,

who created this vision of stimulus dollars to energize the economy and put millions of young people to work who, by the way, saved money, bought clothes or bought school supplies or helped their family but charged the economy, which I am sure will be reflected as we look back over the summer months, those jobs were valuable input into the economy.

That is what a vote will do. And I hope that as you proceed on this Special Order tonight, it will be well recognized how important it is for the vote to be cast and to be counted, and that will be our commitment as we continue to work together.

Ms. FUDGE. Thank you so very much. I appreciate the gentlewoman from Texas for joining me.

I just want to say this one thing: I was listening to one of my colleagues earlier ask what happened to the month of August? The month of August was spent, at least in my district, hiring 6,000 children to work summer jobs. The month of August was a time when I spent time talking to the people at home who want a public option. The month of August wasn't lost. But let me just say that in the event people believe it was, the month of October certainly isn't. And all the polls indicate that more people want a public option than not. So I just want to make that clear to make sure that the record was straight.

Madam Speaker, I want to continue with our hour this evening, and I just want to say to everyone who is listening that we all share in the responsibility to create a better America. One way to strengthen our government is through civic engagement, whether it is through voting, attending a town hall or other public discussion, or writing a letter to your Members of Congress. These e-mails, letters, and phone calls you make to your elected officials really do have an impact.

In my office my staff keeps a tally of all the phone calls we receive on the issues, which I review on a regular basis. One of my constituents, Paul Gordon, calls every week and sometimes several times a week. I may not always agree with Paul Gordon, but I appreciate his comments and encourage him and other constituents to share their views with me. And that's what happened in August, Madam Speaker. People shared their views. We learned a great deal from the dialogue we had in the month of August.

Madam Speaker, in last year's historic presidential election, voter turnout was at a record high, particularly in the African American community. To create change and hold elected officials responsible for their votes, Americans must continue to stay engaged on the issues year round, not just at election time. Moreover, African Americans must be involved in the debate. The stakes are high in every election, on every ballot, and between elections. Every voting day presents Americans with the same question: Will we be the

masters of our own destinies or will we allow others to decide our fate? We must voice our opinions through civic engagement to positively change the course of our cities, towns, and the Nation. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, Our lives begin to end the day, the very day, we become silent about things that matter.

I am proud to share a few stories of individuals from my district who are actively engaged in the civic process. They come from various backgrounds and ages.

□ 2045

However, they all share a desire to help others and to make government responsive to the people.

There is a young woman named Artavia Hill from Euclid, Ohio. She is a shining example of a young person actively engaged in the political process. As president of the NAACP Cleveland Youth Council, she registered voters during Russ Parr's Back to School Bus Tour in August of this year. She also spearheaded the youth council's "Vote Hard, Step Hard: Stop the Violence" which was an event held at Cleveland State University in January where young people were encouraged to register to vote, they discussed the effects of violence on the city and listened to local candidates. Don't give up on our youth. Artavia Hill is not the only one doing things for Cleveland's community.

Dorothy Jones is another young northeast Ohioan committed to civic engagement. Her grandmother, Margaret Walker Fields, put Dorothy under her wing and taught her the importance of voting. During her childhood, Dorothy canvassed the 55th and Broadway area, and helped seniors fill out their absentee ballots. Because of her grandmother and the sense of reward she gets from helping others, she has devoted her life to public service. Dorothy now works for a council member in Cleveland.

It is people with passion like Pearl Livingstone that brought me and many others into politics. Pearl, a Shaker Heights resident, created a program where the Ohio Secretary of State's office sent letters to high school seniors congratulating them for graduating and encouraging them to vote. She also encouraged 17-year-olds, who would be 18 by election day, to register to vote. To support those efforts, she helped start a voting advocacy group in Cleveland to encourage young people to get out and vote. Pearl deserves praise for putting her energies toward engaging young people in the civic process and educating them on the powerful impact of voting.

And then there are seniors. Senior citizens are also very involved in the process. My friend, Dr. Jacklyn Chisholm, told me about one of her friends and mentors and someone I have known for many years, Ms. Dionne Thomas-Carmichael. Dr. Chisholm said Dionne is very involved in the commu-

nity, from signing people up for voter registration, to participating in political campaigns, to galvanizing individuals to care about their communities by turning complaints into positive action through advocacy. She is proud of the years that she has spent on the frontline in grassroots political action. I am always amazed by her energy and willingness to roll up her sleeves and get to work. She believes that we each have a responsibility to ourselves, our families, and our communities to make life better for others. To this end, she recognizes that the political process and advocacy are an important vehicle through which everyday people's voices are heard.

I want to talk just a bit about ex-offenders, sometimes the forgotten people in our society. But in Ohio, an ex-offender can register to vote immediately upon release from confinement even if on parole. The reinstated citizen can vote in the next scheduled election without any restrictions. While there are no barriers that prevent ex-offenders from voting in the State of Ohio, many ex-offenders are not aware that they have these rights. David Singleton who is the executive director of the Prison Reform Advocacy Center says: "States like Ohio, where all former prisoners can vote as soon as they are released, should take steps to ensure the ex-offenders fully understand this important right. When former prisoners believe they are stakeholders in their communities and have the power to contribute to civic life, they are more likely to succeed which is in all of our best interests. Our democracy suffers when the voices of all eligible voters, including former prisoners, are not heard. If 20 percent of the 34,000 ex-offenders on community supervision in Ohio are not voting because they erroneously believe they are ineligible to do so, then 6,800 potential votes have been lost. We want to ensure that ex-prisoners are not being disenfranchised on account of misinformation."

Count every vote. We have all seen why counting each and every vote in an election is so important. During the 2004 Presidential election, Ohio suffered unfortunate irregularities in the voting system, which caused confusion and disruption. That disenfranchisement of voters is why my dear friend, the late Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones, introduced the Count Every Vote Act while a Member of Congress. The Count Every Vote Act, or CEVA for short, sought to remedy many of the problems that voters continue to face all over this country. This bill is not yet law, but should be.

While the bill is not law and has not been reintroduced this year, I want to highlight some of the voter protection and enfranchisement provisions of this bill.

CEVA maintains that voters deserve a paper trail of their electronic vote. This must be done to ensure accuracy in counting and avoid technological

glitches. The first portion of the bill focuses on voter verification and auditing procedures.

CEVA would require that all voting systems produce or require the use of voter-verified paper ballot or record suitable for manual audits.

We must ensure that all Americans, including those with disabilities or language barriers, retain their right to cast a ballot. To that end, CEVA asks that the Federal Government require that at least one machine per precinct must allow voters with disabilities and language-minority voters to cast a vote in a private and independent manner.

I believe that the Federal Government should require all States to offer early voting. CEVA makes this proposal to encourage people to vote by allowing them to vote at times convenient for them and avoiding long lines on election day. As I mentioned before, for our democracy to function well, all Americans must have a pathway to participate in the election process. To that end, the bill proposes that all States end the practice of prohibiting convicted felons who have completed their prison term, parole or probation to vote. After all, they have served their time.

CEVA further proposes that we study the impact of making election day a Federal holiday. Creating such a day would give more voters time to cast ballots and allow more qualified people to serve as poll workers.

Our leadership and moral strength is only enhanced when we help others. We lift as we rise. To have a vibrant democracy, we must encourage the participation of all citizens and fight against efforts to disenfranchise voters. We must work to ensure that our citizens do not encounter barriers to their full participation in the election process. Whether it is seniors who need transportation to the voting booth or ex-offenders who are unaware of the reinstatement of the right to vote, we cannot sit by while our fellow Americans are excluded from the democratic process. We must also encourage voters to be educated and organized citizens in order to strengthen and empower our communities. At the end of the day, civic participation is both a duty and a right.

The legislative process affects all aspects of our lives and we cannot afford to remain silent. Your vote is your voice, so speak loud and clear. Members of Congress and all elected officials will hear you.

Next Tuesday is election day for many. Use the power of your one vote. When you do not vote, by default you cast a ballot against the person or proposal you prefer. Your missing vote is one less that the opposition has to overcome. Thus, your vote is for those with whom you disagree. Get out, use your voice, and vote.

FREE ENTERPRISE, THE FOUNDATION OF AMERICA'S ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a privilege to address you here tonight on the floor of the House of Representatives in this great deliberative body that we once were and sometimes are and perhaps one day will be again in honor of the traditions that we have in this Congress. It has been a difficult year for this deliberative body, and one of the reasons for that I believe is the leadership of this House and the leadership of the majority party seem to be quite concerned about open public debate, quite concerned about limiting the amendments that come to the floor, and quite concerned about pushing a new President's agenda. This new President's agenda follows through a whole series of major moves from a business perspective. Some of them actually started before his election and some of them happened after his election and many of them happened after the President's inauguration. But we have witnessed here within the last 15 months or so the nationalization of huge business entities in America. It is framed by the \$700 billion TARP bailout and the \$787 billion stimulus plan. In the middle of all of that came the nationalization of three large investment banks, AIG, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, General Motors, and Chrysler. All of that adds up to about one-third of America's private sector being nationalized, much of it under the watch of this administration, but not all of it, in fairness, Madam Speaker.

The American people are nervous. They know that free enterprise is the foundation of America's economic system. That is so basic to the American people, the value of free enterprise, and it is so basic to the values of, let me say USCIS, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, that they have a whole stack of flashcards that are prepared for those who would study for the naturalization test, those immigrants who go through the process to become American citizens, the people we celebrate as Americans by choice, a whole series of flashcards, the history of America is on those flashcards. They are stacked that deep, and you can turn one after another over and you can understand about what George Washington and the Constitution and the Declaration and the Bill of Rights and the Fourth of July and the list goes on and on.

One of those flashcards, Madam Speakers, asks what is the economic system of the United States of America? You flip the card over and it says free enterprise capitalism is the economic system of the United States of America. Yet one-third of it has been nationalized by the Federal Govern-

ment, and no exit strategy seems to be in sight. As the American people watch this rush towards the socialization/nationalization of one-third of our economy, they also saw a cap-and-trade bill pushed through, about 12 hours from the time the bill was dropped until such time it was on the floor for debate without legitimate amendments.

The American people watched this and they understood intuitively, if not articulated on the streets, that they understood that freedom was being compromised. The principles of our free market system were being compromised. They also understood that a prudent government with people that hold the gavels that are fiscally responsible and a future President that might be fiscally responsible, I believe I have given up hope on this one, could actually set things up so we could work our way through the trillions of dollars of debt that we now have and work our way through the nationalization and begin to privatize, sell those shares back to General Motors, sell them back to Chrysler, privatize Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and require them to be capitalized like other lending institutions, regulate them like other lending institutions and sell those shares back in the marketplace, and for the Federal Government to divest themselves from their investment in this huge nationalization, AIG included.

□ 2100

Now, that could all happen under a future President and under a Congress that is dominated by people that just believe simply the opposite side of that flashcard that asks the question of anybody that wants to become an American citizen, what is the economic system of the United States? Flip it over, free enterprise capitalism. That compels the Federal Government to divest itself if, of course, we believe in the tenet that we require people to know if they're to become an American citizen and naturalize an American citizen.

So the American people saw this rush, they saw this push that went towards this nationalization of our one-third of our economy and the rush through cap-and-trade in the House, and now it is stalled in the Senate, thankfully. I hope it doesn't get brought up again. It is a tax on all of our energy. It is cap-and-tax.

But all of this went through in a rush, and the American people didn't have an opportunity to weigh in. Before they could catch up with what was going on, decisions were made. Those decisions were made behind closed doors—and sometimes the irrevocable decisions of the nationalization of these entities. And once they saw all that happen and they saw the President push hard for \$787 billion in bailout money—and, Madam Speaker, they saw every Republican vote “no” on that \$787 billion and they thought, at least there's a sign for hope here; Republicans are sticking together. But